

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

Cobwebs and Musical Directors—The Operator's Point of View
 Death of Mr. A. H. Paxton—New Issues from the Publishers
 Conducted by ALBERT CAZABON

THE LISTENER IN THE BOX As Others See Us

By ALBERT CAZABON

An Operator on Music

Some time ago I wrote in these pages an article on the subject of "Running Speed." In that article, the object of which was to open up a subject which is of great importance in the adequate musical presentation of films, I had a few words to say about operators, whose attention to this matter of running speed can be of such great assistance in musical synchronisation.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I draw attention to the contribution which appears in this issue from Mr. S. H. Bowen.

In the first place, it is good to see an operator taking an interest in the musical side of film-showing, and displaying a sympathetic appreciation of the musical director's work. In the second place, it is always worth while to take such opportunities as may come of seeing ourselves as others see us, and I am sure that musical directors will be interested in seeing this shaft of light thrown down upon some of their kind from the operating box, from the point of view of its occupant.

Speed and Synchronisation

Mr. Bowen is sound in his recognition of what music means to a picture, and of the fact that a film can be made or marred by the responsible musician. Such extreme instances of misfitting as he quotes may have been contributed to by vagaries in projection, but all the same, an alert conductor should be able to deal, in emergency, with quite a considerable variation in running speed without "giving the show away" to the audience. But these emergencies can be avoided and should not be regarded, as they are in too many places, as part of the normal routine.

It is somewhat surprising to learn that on the occasion of a more than usually bad piece of timing, remarks about the operator were heard in the audience. This, I am convinced, must have been an absolutely unique occasion, and whoever made the derogatory observations about the operator must have been some person who had just a little knowledge of the working of a cinema. Certainly he was not a representative member of the average audience.

What the Audience Knows

Among any ordinary audience, the number of people who know anything about projection is infinitesimally small. In the earlier days of bad projection, faulty "gates," frequent breakages, failure of light and badly constructed projection boxes, audiences may

certainly have been all too painfully aware of a noisy machine which projected a flickering and unsteady picture on to the screen. But in these days of perfected machinery and improved methods, under the control of highly skilled operators, it is only on the increasingly rare occasions of some accident, as when a film breaks or runs off the rack for a moment, that the average audience has any thought of what is going on in the operating box. In the absence of any really glaring error in projection, their attention is absorbed entirely by the screen and the music.

As for errors in timing, resulting in the failure of music and film to synchronise, operators who read these pages may take heart—they will never be blamed. Whatever be the cause of a fault in synchronisation—short of the actual disappearance of the picture from the screen—it is the musical director who will be blamed every time.

And I am bound to say that in quite a large number of cases, if not in the majority, this blame will be right, for I have already conceded that the musical director should be able to deal in emergency with quite considerable variation in running speed before losing contact with the screen.

The Operator's Share

But this does not by any means clear the operator of all responsibility in the matter. The synchronisation of music and picture, for which the musical director is responsible, is an art which requires the utmost concentration and alertness. Why should the difficulties of the musician be added to by casual methods of running when these can be so easily avoided?

Most conductors of any width of experience can emphatically endorse Mr. Bowen's description of the "cobwebbed" operators who "stick to a rule that, regardless of running time, each spool, whether it be small

or large, must take ten or twelve minutes.

In that connection, and for the benefit of operators and others who did not see my article on "Running Speed," I may quote from it an actual and quite typical experience of my own. On the occasion of an important trade show in a leading provincial town, I approached the operator before rehearsal and asked him my usual question as to what was his idea of normal running speed. "Ten minutes a reel," was the reply. Upon my pointing out that he varied considerably in length and asking the operator how he could possibly time his reels, which might vary by anything up to 400 feet and more, he responded that that house they *always* stuck to the ten minutes per reel. "If it's a short reel we pull her back, and if it's a long one, we speed her up."

I make no apology for repeating the incident, because it happens to be a fact, occurring precisely as related, and because, though an extreme instance, others of its kind are all too easily to be met with.

Speedometers Again

And now, Messrs. Operators, what about speedometers?

Since I first wrote on this subject, describing my fruitless quest for the elusive speedometer, I have certainly met one, and I have heard of the actual existence of others. The one I have met is in the private projection room of a big firm of renters, the others are in two or three of the most important super-cinemas. But are we any nearer to the universal adoption of the speedometer as part of the standard equipment in the average theatre? If not, why not?

If operators who happen to glance at these pages can shed any light on this subject I hope they will come forward and give us the benefit of their experience.

If the various makes of speedometer now available have any inherent weakness (and in these days of perfected electronic mechanism that is hard to accept) what is that weakness? If, on the other hand and as I have good reason to believe, the thoroughly reliable speedometer has been available for some time, why is it not in more general use, and what are the prospects of its becoming so?

Perhaps Mr. Bowen or some of his colleagues of the operating box will be able and willing to give readers of THE BIOSCOPE some information on this subject from their own technical and authoritative standpoint? If so, their views will be read with keen interest.

NEXT WEEK

"Running the Show"

will contain a special section devoted to the important subject of

VENTILATION.

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

The "Make-up" of Suggestion Lists—Criticism and Abuse—
The New "Faust" Setting—Popular Demand Considered

Conducted by ALBERT CAZABON

The Language of Suggestion Lists A Wider Range of Terms Needed

By ALBERT CAZABON

The letter appearing in these columns from Mr. Isidore Schwiller certainly raises some practical points in connection with the "make-up" of suggestion lists and other matters affecting the setting of films to music.

When a piece of music is quoted for a given scene in a film, the musical director may or may not have that particular piece in his library. If he does not possess it, it is fairly certain that he will possess some other piece—perhaps even several others—which will serve equally well, as being of the same character and conveying the same dramatic meaning.

A Test by Result

For that reason it has always seemed to me that the column which gives the description of the style of music, or the nature of the scene to be illustrated, is of supreme importance. If the musician using the cue-sheet is given the clearest indication which can be given in two words of what is dramatically required, it is in many cases of more assistance to him than the name of the piece itself. Having always kept these facts in view, and having followed the precepts indicated as consistently as I was able in my own work, it is naturally gratifying when, as in this instance, a musical director who has used my lists comes forward to testify that a practical result has been achieved.

Criticism—Just and Otherwise

The compiler of suggestion lists comes in for plenty of criticism, and even abuse, from those who use his lists. Sometimes, no doubt, the abuse is merited, sometimes the fault is not in the compiler so much as in the cinema conductor who is not able to make intelligent use of a good cue-sheet when he gets it, and so blames someone else for his own limitations.

Important Details

When a cue-sheet fails to be the really helpful and useful thing it ought to be, the reasons for its failure are various. These reasons range from the case of the cue-sheet which is simply a thoroughly bad job—hastily or ignorantly compiled from a setting which in itself was a bad one to commence with, and about which no more need be said—to the one which just fails because of one or two small details whose importance has been underestimated or overlooked. And I feel sure that where many an otherwise excellent cue-sheet falls short is in that important matter of the descriptions given under the column headed, "Style of Music," or whatever the wording adopted may be.

The Printer Intervenes

At one time I used to head my description column—"Style of Music or Nature of Scene." This was done in order that the musician using the sheet would realise that

an attempt was being made to give him some idea of the actual effect required. Should he not know the piece of music quoted, an indication of what it was required to illustrate would help him to select something else which would apply approximately well. Space on a sheet is limited, however, and printers sometimes had a way of gently hinting at that fact by abbreviating to something which they were more in the habit of printing. Certainly the sound literary principle that six words should not be used when three will suffice merits observance, in a suggestion list as in other things.

General Terms are Insufficient

Whatever the wording of the heading be, this is of small importance. What does matter is, to my mind, that the description given under it, while of necessity brief, should really give as clear an idea as possible of the mood or action to be expressed. That is why I regard the "Style" column as calling for the use, not merely of general terms of musical classification, but also of phrases of dramatic meaning.

This means going far beyond the range covered by the usual catalogue headings, which are few in number and only general in application. Our customary "agitato," "sentimental," "flowing," and so forth, are not in themselves sufficient. Even the addition of the usual qualifying adjectives is not always enough.

Degrees of "Agitation"

Take our much-used word "agitato." Incidentally, I see no need for the use of two languages in the "Style" column, and so prefer the English form of "agitation," but that is purely a personal matter. Qualify the "agitation," then, as "light" or "heavy" as the case may be, and the classification is narrowed down a little, but is it enough? In very many cases it certainly is not.

That particular "light agitation" may be just the right thing to convey what is perhaps a scene of very subtle drama, needing the most careful and suggestive treatment. If the piece is a well-known one which the musician using the sheet has already in his library, all well and good. If not, some other piece which comes under the general heading

of "light agitation" will be picked out, and quite probably will not suit the scene at all. Give the man at the cinema end some idea of the nature of the scene, and quite possibly he will be able, in the absence of the piece quoted, to fit the scene admirably with something which appears in his library catalogue under some other heading than "light agitation."

I am not advocating that cue-sheets should be loaded up with subtly differing phrases for every cue. This is not necessary, and might, indeed, defeat its own object. If the imagined instance I have suggested is not a thing of subtlety and special suggestion, but a case in which almost anything in the "light agitation" class is in fact likely to be suitable, I would certainly let it go at that, reserving special description for where it is really needed.

Cases of Illustration

Looking up a few old suggestion lists, I find at random a few instances which I may quote in justification of the principles advanced.

Under the "Style of Music" column appears, not a musical classification at all, but a description of the scene in two words: "Fair scene." The piece used was in fact a two-step, but it was in this case of no importance whether a fox-trot, valse or some other piece of music were used in its stead, beside the fact that the thing required should be illustrative of the noise and atmosphere of a scene at a fair.

That particular two-step happened to possess the character required for the purpose, but, assuming that the man using the sheet did not have it in his library he would know what he had to illustrate, and probably would do so equally well—perhaps even go one better—with something other than a two-step.

Tension—Why "Dramatic"?

Other instances come under the heading of "tension," in varying degrees. Of all loosely applied terms the familiar phrase "dramatic tension" is perhaps the one most subject to misunderstanding. In the first place, we have an unnecessary and quite useless adjective, for the general term "tension" must of necessity be "dramatic"; therefore, if only the general heading is called for the single word should be enough. But it is usually important that some indication of the kind or degree of tension should be given, and there is a plentiful choice of words in the English language which will fulfil the purpose for practically every case.

Visualising a Scene

Here, then, is a case where three "tensions" appear in succession. But there is a reason for three short "tensions" being indicated rather than one long one, and that is immediately made clear by their being labelled respectively as "subdued tension,"

"increasing tension" and "agitated tension." Add to this the fact that the next cue is labelled "mournful," and I think it is not too much to claim that the man who has not seen the picture has been given a fairly accurate idea of the emotional content of an important dramatic sequence. By the exercise of a little imagination he can almost visualise the scene for himself. Certainly the use of those few carefully selected yet quite ordinary English words should be more helpful to him than the names of the pieces of music themselves, which quite probably he may not know.

Other instances could be quoted in plenty, but enough has been said at the moment to establish the main principle advocated.

A Musical Director's Letter

We have received from Isidore Schwiller, musical director of the Tower Cinema, Peckham, the following letter:—"At our inaugural Cinema Musical Directors' meeting there was so much to listen to and to talk about that I had no opportunity of telling Mr. Cazabon what a wonderful help his musical suggestions to 'Oh! What a Nurse' some little time back were to me—not having had the chance to see the film beforehand. I consider it was a brilliant example of aptness without any point being laboured. When the character of a situation or piece of music was given, the description was clearly understandable, and this is a point that I should like you to persuade our fellow picture-setters who issue cue-sheets to have some unanimity upon.

A Standard of Description

"I think that, say, a dozen or so terms of description might be thoroughly threshed out and decided upon, for only so can our patchwork system that passes for musical setting have some chance of translation from mind to mind, until such time as the scenario writer and the film editor will be recruited from the ranks of those that have some broad musical understanding.

"I think an informal conference of some of our musical trade show exponents would help to such an end.

The Musical Director's Maze

"With all our progress in the musical sense, I am inclined to doubt whether, discarding the primitive attempt at playing to pictures an intelligible piece of music to the end has given us anything more than a mere musical cross-word puzzle. I am aware that this statement will be pooh-poohed by the up-to-date expert in the musical setting world, but if we are to follow an art and not an industry we shall all have to get into closer touch if we mean to achieve a generally artistic result.

"In films of broader conception and unusual subject-matter more scope is already given for better musical achievement—but such pictures so far are rare.

"A similar difficulty was experienced by the composers of the music drama before the advent of the suitable librettist, but as such writers can now be found almost daily, why not scenario film writers who will have in their minds a musical background with due allowance for the quick eye and the slow ear—the one for the picture, the other for music?"

"Faust" at the Pavilion, Marble Arch

W. E. Hodgson's New Musical Setting

After the wide publicity given to the views of Sir Landon Ronald and those of the directorate of Wardour Films on how the "Faust" film should be treated musically, the matter has been given a further stimulus by the presentation of the film at the Marble Arch Pavilion.

New Musical Setting

In view of the diverse opinions expressed upon Sir Landon Ronald's setting, Wardour Films decided to experiment on lines more in accordance with their own ideas, including the introduction of singers to sing airs from the Gounod opera. Further, an entirely new musical setting, incorporating these items as vocal numbers, was arranged by W. E. Hodgson, musical director of the Marble Arch Pavilion, for the run of the film at that house.

To the Advantage of the Film

It was to be expected that the practised hand of a cinema musician would tell in ways which the original setting missed. Some of the most aptly illustrative and successful items from that setting are used in Mr. Hodgson's score, but mostly these are such things as are almost bound to spring to mind in any case. For the rest, this new setting differs very markedly from the one heard at the Albert Hall, and does so, it must be said, to the considerable advantage of the film. Points of dramatic emphasis are taken up with clarity, decision and dramatic sense, yet at the same time without being over-stressed. Among many felicitous touches, the use of the "Menuet des Follets" of Berlioz, and the way it is made to apply to the action, is specially excellent, but the setting as a whole contains many such good points. Criticism of certain selections on aesthetic grounds might conceivably be made, but these are mainly questions of individual taste, and of no great importance. For the technical quality of the setting there can be nothing but praise. The performance under Mr. Hodgson's conducting was admirable. "Changes" were scarcely noticeable even to one who was instinctively on the watch for them. This was due not only to the fact of a sound technician being in charge, but also to the well-arranged scheme of key sequence. Timing, too, was excellent—there were no ragged edges between numbers, and at no time did a full close fail to synchronise with the fade-out for which it was timed.

The Influence of the Opera

But the general public, though influenced more or less unconsciously by these things, to their greater enjoyment of the film, are less likely to be interested in subtleties of dramatic treatment than in the fact that a composer named Gounod once wrote an opera called "Faust," the story of which was drawn from incidents in one of the world's greatest stories. This story has long been a common store for poets, dramatists, composers, and more latterly film producers, to make what they will of it. This freedom notwithstanding, to the vast majority of our public the name of "Faust" means simply Gounod's opera, and it is natural that the appearance of the story in film form should

arouse expectations that here is a vehicle for the tunes that we have all known from our cradle. Now, had the film been made in France, or possibly even in Italy, America, or England, it may safely be assumed that these natural expectations would have been a hundred per cent. realised. In all probability the opera, if not actually the *raison d'être* of the film's being, would certainly be a strongly dominating influence.

Popular Demand and Expectation

But the film was made in Germany, where the Gounod opera "cuts less ice" than it does anywhere else, and where, after Goethe, the native mind might turn more readily to Chris Marlowe than to Jules Barbieri and Michel Carré. While many incidents, together with the main outline of the story, naturally coincide with the opera version, Gounod has clearly not been a prime mover in the case. The result is that considerable ingenuity is required to fit the Gounod which everybody wants into the scheme of the film as it stands. The "Jewel Song" certainly does not fit the action of the scene in which it is used, particularly when the number is sung complete with the words. Yet, if it is to be used at all, there is no other place in the film where it could possibly occur. The excuse for placing it, though not very robust, cannot justly be called utterly illegitimate, when due account is taken of factors of popular demand and expectation. The excuse is there, it has been seized upon, and undoubtedly multitudes will receive great pleasure from it.

Success of the "Soldiers' Chorus"

Other Gounod items are more apt by far than the "Jewel Song." The "Soldiers' Chorus" and the "Calf of Gold" song are, in fact, entirely successful, both dramatically and musically, and at the performance visited they were brought in with absolutely perfect timing.

Altogether, Mr. Hodgson's setting is a decided asset to the film, and, since we must have our Gounod, the items have been interpolated with such skill that it is difficult to imagine the work being better done.

Of the singers, Appleton Moore, in the Mephisto songs, made the best of his material. Olive Jenkin's voice has a roundness and warmth which is less effective than a more sparkling quality would be in things like the "Jewel Song," while Edward Leer's production is somewhat marred by excessive vibrato.

Horns by Act of Parliament

The Marble Arch Pavilion orchestra is excellent, the crisp and clean playing of the violins being particularly good in light and rapid passages. But trombone soli, however well they may be played, are not things for which the soul continues to cry out after the first three or four have been heard. It is the old problem of the reduced orchestra, what we are to do with that dominating personality—the solitary trombone. The horns are of course a great help, whose value cannot be replaced. Horns ought to be impelled by Act of Parliament (with, of course, the rest of the orchestra to balance) on every cinema above a certain seating capacity.

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

Cinema Orchestra Faults—"Under-fitting" Too Common—
The Strenuous Musician—Some New Music Reviewed

Conducted by ALBERT CAZABON

EMOTION CARICATURED

The Effects of Over-Emphasis

A New Phase?

Over-emphasis is a not uncommon fault in picture accompaniment to-day. Time was—and not so very long ago—when if I had been asked to express an opinion on the subject I should have been inclined to say that the prevailing weakness ran more in the opposite direction. "Under-fitting"—the tendency to play long pieces and selections in order to reduce changes, the lack of dramatic feeling in following the action of a film, the neglect of salient points which needed emphasising—these, I should have said, were the faults more likely to be found among the general run of cinemas than the opposing ones of over-fitting and over-emphasis.

A Noisy Minority

Now I am not so sure that the tendency is not beginning to veer round the other way. That may be merely an accidental impression, caused by visits to a few shows where over-emphasis happened to be more in evidence than the other thing. Be that as it may, the fact remains that examples of over-emphasis are not far to seek. Even if such examples continue for the present to be in the minority, they constitute literally a very noisy minority, such as none but the stone-deaf can ignore!

Criticism Awakened

A little while back I was at an afternoon performance in one of the most representative London cinemas. Taking a "busman's holiday," it happened that I was not in a very critical frame of mind, until my companion called my attention to what I may call a hundred-per-cent. climax in the orchestra where, say, only 50 per cent. had been called for by the action on the screen. After that it became all too obvious that the musical setting (quite good in most other respects) was spoilt by one example after another of over-emphasis.

But this, after all, was only a very mild example among many such—of settings which just fail to be first-rate by reason of the same lack of a right sense of proportion. Such comparatively mild specimens of crudity might pass without comment but for the fact that they happen to bring to mind a few more examples, beside which they recede into almost complete obliteration.

Caricature

At various times I have heard settings to films which, in the anxiety of their compilers to emphasize every possible and impossible point, amounted simply to caricature.

This is the sort of thing which happens when the devotee of italics holds sway:—The film is a domestic drama containing the expected average of situations such as come under the usual suggestion list headings of "tension" and "plaintive."

The young wife and husband are engaged in a scene of misunderstanding. The situation is strained and anxious, but no extreme of tension is yet reached, for the climax is a reel or more ahead. The music expresses the depths of tragic gloom or agony, such as would admirably fit a prison scene in which the wrongfully condemned heroine was waiting to be led to execution by some exceptionally painful method.

The Red Light

Next change—the hero takes the cigarette from between his lips and, with a look of serious inquiry, turns to his wife. On goes the red light (a most appropriate symbol for this particular method of picture-setting) and there is a low mutter from the tympani, such as might presage the coming of some awful doom. The wife gives a wry, nervous smile and shakes her head, what time the tympanist shows what he can do in the way of a good *crescendo*.

When we are in the properly recipient frame of mind to enjoy a really well-acted murder scene, the wife's head droops into her hands and she weeps. The tympani roll reaches its climax, and the orchestra breaks out with a horrific outburst, which would be exactly right had the hero battered his wife's brains out with the grand piano before our eyes. As a matter of fact, the hero only looks rather worried, clenches his hands and turns away impatiently.

Exciting Happenings

Upon this last action the orchestra having gone "hell for leather" while the hero looked rather angry, stops dead with a devastating crash. Then we think something really ought to happen. And it does! The happenings on the screen are mere childish nothings, compared with the orgy of excitement which goes on in the orchestra, which, with an energy which leaves one beyond surprise, hurls itself into the frenetic transports of "Vomiting Appassionato No. 98356," by Rudolph K. Phut.

This time the hero begins to look really angry, and almost excited. The red light glows more balefully than ever, and there is



Albert Cazabon

an ominous silence. Now, surely, something really soul-splitting is surely going to happen?

Something does, and though it nearly succeeds in splitting the ear-drums, it fortunately leaves the soul intact. The hero clenches his fists more firmly than before, and advances upon his wife in three quite emphatic strides. She tosses her head defiantly, turns from him, marches out of the room, slams the door (effect on drum) and goes out.

The Strenuous Musician

No, the lady is not even going to her lover—she leaves the house to return to her mother, because her husband wrongfully suspects her. A title such as "Then I shall leave you," gives the orchestra its chance again, and we are treated to "Frantic Agitato No. 99999" (for volcanoes, earthquakes, riots, upheavals and burst water-pipes) performed with an energy which leaves us with a pitying smile for those who ignorantly regard the life of a cinema musician as representing a sedentary occupation, instead of the violent over-indulgence in physical exercise which it can actually be.

The Climax Missed

What happens a reel or so later, when the climax—a real dramatic climax—is actually reached? Just nothing. Our ears have become accustomed to mere noise and our nerves are no longer re-active to shock. The orchestra has previously made all possible assaults on our hearing, and our powers of emotional re-action are blunted, and the climax passes unnoticed.

Afterwards, when we have left the theatre and soothed our jaded nerves with the quiet peaceful hum of the city traffic, we may begin to realise what the film really meant. But that will not be before the headache has passed.

A PROBLEM ?

Let "The Bioscope"
solve it.

The help of the
Advisory Committee
is at your service.

their order of screening—another useful feature.

Advertising at Night

There can be little doubt but that the street display of advertisements at night possesses profit-pulling attributes when it is considered that pedestrians are on leisure bent at this time of day. The management of the Rialto, Coventry Street, evidently appreciate this fact, for the other evening five men with boards on their backs and two posters stretched on frames over their heads and illuminated were to be seen advertising "The Reckless Sex."



A fine poster site admirably used: The Ideal Comedy Poster in Shaftesbury Avenue, London.

A Well-done "Spoof"

An advertising stunt that no doubt brought the film into prominent notice was carried out by John J. Backhouse, manager of the Kursaal Kinema, Southend, for the screening of "His People." It took the form of a "Lost" notice, as under:

LOST!

In High Street, Southend-on-Sea, on Saturday, February 12th, about 12.30 p.m.

A LADY'S HANDBAG

containing three £1 notes, some small change and six reserved seats for "His People."

If finder will return the tickets to the manager, Kursaal Kinema, before Wednesday, February 16th, at 8 o'clock, he may keep the money as a slight appreciation for his trouble.

Moss' Empires' Campaign Sheet

A useful aid for exhibitors running "No Man's Law," one of the Bob Custer features, is being issued by Moss' Empires. Printed on two broadsheets lightly pinned together, the publication contains concise details, with prices, of all the publicity material supplied, including illustrations of the posters, single and double-column advertisement blocks and stills, also musical suggestions and newspaper paragraphs. An innovation is the description of the character played appearing against the name of each member of the cast.

The House Organ as a Personal Link

Feeling the Pulse of the Patron

Desirable Psychological Effects

Considering the intimate touch with the patron made possible by means of the house organ, it is surprising the number of exhibitors who still neglect this medium of publicity. If the publication be competently arranged and interestingly composed, its advertising value is out of all proportion to the cost of production. Here is a brightly-written and illustrated compendium of coming attractions that is taken into the home to be perused at leisure by members of the household. And there is the distinct benefit of the showman's personal touch: in his own words a recital of the salient interest-points not only in the entertainment to be seen, but perhaps connected with its actual making.

Avoiding Triteness

Nor should there be overlooked the potentialities of original, spontaneous description which on account of length cannot find place in the ordinary advertising. So far as the bizarre is avoided, a soupçon of unconventionality becomes an asset. Above all, the matter must be interesting—not the re-printed puff-pars of some renters. Such material often contains the germ of good ideas, however, and is not to be neglected by the exhibitor capable of re-casting it in more temperate form. The aim at which to strive is informativeness without a mass of fulsome praise.

Cultivating Co-operation

Most of the better examples of house organs run a correspondence feature to which patrons are invited to contribute their opinions on the subjects shown, and receive managerial reply. This is a wise course to pursue, for the exhibitor is in a position to gauge his audience's preferences. At the same time, a psychological consideration is involved; the mere fact of his criticism being sought and acted upon impresses

the patron with the management's desire to conform to his likes and dislikes. It makes him feel that he is not just an insignificant spectator but an entertainment-seeker whose needs are being studied. The exhibitor will also find opportunities to give brief particulars of forthcoming titles and stars when these matters are raised by correspondence, and such notices will be read with more than ordinary interest for not being in the form of blatant advertising.

Stimulating the Imagination

Should points of comparison arise between a future film and one already shown, remark should be made of them. Clearly, this will have to supplement the renter's and trade-journals' publicity suggestions, as neither has a knowledge of individual booking lists. There is the opportunity for a personal touch. Viola Dana was at the Palace a fortnight ago: next week's attraction features Edna Flugrath, imagine. Drawing upon the fertility of his mind, the exhibitor might well write something on the lines that follow:—

A Concrete Example

"Next Monday Edna Flugrath is appearing in 'Counting the Cost.' She has a part of many dramatic opportunities and gives a strikingly emotional performance. Patrons who laughed so much at Viola Dana in 'Better Say Yes' will be curious to compare the physical resemblance yet such widely-differing personalities of these two stars, who are sisters. Miss Flugrath's work has mainly been done in England, but Viola Dana is a graduate of the Californian school of acting."

This example will serve to indicate the desirability of freshness and appositeness, which qualities should pervade the house organ in style, format and editing.



Exploiting a Syd Chaplin Film: How Mr. Wilcox of the Playhouse, Alnwick, advertised "Oh! What a Nurse" (Gaumont)